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UNCLAS ROME 000715

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FROM U.S. MISSION TO THE UN AGENCIES IN ROME

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: WFP EMERGENCY NEEDS ASSESSMENT UPDATE

Ref: 04 Rome 2839

1. Summary. At its third regular Executive Board session in October 2004, WFP presented an update on actions already taken and activities to be implemented in a 30-month timeframe that will enable it to strengthen "its competencies and capacities to ensure the quality, credibility, comparability and transparency of emergency needs assessments." Since then WFP has continued to strengthen its ENA capacity with the support of a recently launched ECHO-funded project, which is proceeding apace with meetings of its advisory group and technical committee in mid-March 2005. End summary.

2. Background. In February and again in October 2003, following extensive criticism of emergency needs assessments (ENAs), WFP's Executive Board endorsed an ENA strengthening program to increase transparency and accountability, strengthen methodology, improve crisis information for selected crisis-prone countries, and augment ENA capacity through learning programs for staff and partners. In addition, in June 2004, per ref tel, G-8 countries pledged to improve ENAs and response systems despite funding uncertainties.

3. In recent discussions with USUN Rome representative Philip Lamade, WFP's Wolfgang Herbinger indicated that WFP's recent activities generally correspond with the 2004 through 2006 timetable of the paper presented to the October 2004 Executive Board on strengthening ENAs. For example, under transparency and accountability, an estimated 40 to 50 reports have been posted, and checklists for ENA reports are now being filed for each assessment.

4. Similarly, under methodologies and guidance, joint WFP/UNHCR guidelines have been issued. A draft of the emergency food security assessment (EFSA) handbook has been issued, but a revision of the 1996 crop food supply assessment mission (CFSAM) handbook used for joint missions with FAO is not likely to be completed until 2006. With regard to building capacity, in 2005 and 2006, WFP anticipates training 300 WFP staff as well as NGO and governmental personnel to strengthen necessary skills for ENAs. Next week in Rome, WFP plans to pilot test a one-week training seminar; in April, a joint UNHCR/WFP workshop in Dar es Salaam is being scheduled.

5. Also in October 2004, the European Community Humanitarian Aid department (ECHO) provided funds to WFP in the amount of Euro 4.5 million to cover the first 12 months (although given initial delays, possibly 15 months) of a potential 30-month project to strengthen emergency needs assessment capacity (SENAC). The project covers some of the activities listed in the timetable discussed above, e.g., ENA website access, research and field-testing of methodologies, and regional assessment specialists. Essentially, three Rome-based project personnel will be augmented at WFP regional bureaus by a total of 12 assessment specialists, of whom 8 have already been recruited.

6. The SENAC project is guided by a technical committee consisting of donor representatives and supervised by WFP's Wolfgang Herbinger. The project is also supported by an advisory group of experts representing academia, government, non-governmental organizations, and other UN agencies. The technical committee is scheduled to meet for the third time on March 16 and 17, 2005; the advisory group, including members of the technical committee and ECHO project staff, meets for the first time on March 14 and 15, 2005.

7. In the first year, project foci will include the role of markets and effects of food aid on markets, the impact of food aid on households, chronic versus transitory food insecurity, non-food responses to food crises, and baseline and crisis information systems. Planned activities include the following:

-- Developing food security pre-crisis baselines in Angola,

Democratic Republic of the Congo, Madagascar, Myanmar,
Nepal, Niger, Uganda, and Zambia.

-- Developing food security monitoring systems in
Afghanistan, Burundi, Central African Republic, Cote
D'Ivoire, Sudan, and Haiti.

-- Developing assessment tools related to the role of
markets.

-- Testing and adapting ENA methods in Burundi, Cote
D'Ivoire, Liberia, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Angola, and
Mozambique.

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2005ROME00715 - Classification: UNCLASSIFIED